

The Catholic Church and the Sex Problem

The Stupidity, Futility and
Insolence of Its Ethic



Joseph McCabe

See Sharp Press

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A pamphlet by
J. Edgar Hoover

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Publisher's Note

During its day, the original publisher of this pamphlet, the Haldeman-Julius Company of Girard, Kansas, was the most important publisher of radical materials in the United States. From the founding of his company in 1919 until his early death in 1951—quite possibly hastened by IRS harassment—E. Haldeman-Julius published more than 2500 books and pamphlets.

One of Haldeman-Julius's most important and most prolific writers was Joseph McCabe, the author of this pamphlet. In regard to Christianity and, especially, Catholicism, McCabe was perhaps the most learned atheist writer who ever lived. This was a result of his native gifts and his background—he was a former Catholic priest, fluent in Latin and several other languages, who had taught philosophy and ecclesiastical history in a Catholic college. During his lifetime (1867–1956), he translated dozens of books and wrote hundreds of his own books and pamphlets, all on various aspects of history, and a great many on religious topics.

The original edition of *The Catholic Church and the Sex Problem* appeared in 1949, a time when McCabe was already in his 80s. As regards this pamphlet's content, McCabe was overly pessimistic in his assessment of the ability of agriculture to keep pace with population increase. But, given that the Earth has a finite "carrying capacity," McCabe was only incorrect about *when* the inevitable calamity will occur, not about *if* it will occur, assuming unlimited population increase (as advocated by the Catholic Church). As for the remainder of the contents of this pamphlet, they remain as relevant today as when they were first published half a century ago. Given the sordidness of the Catholic Church's history, practices, and ideology relating to sex, as revealed here by McCabe, today's bombings of abortion clinics and murder of doctors by Catholic fanatics should come as no surprise. They certainly wouldn't have surprised Joseph McCabe.

—Chaz Bufe, October 5, 1998

FOREWORD

"Immutable Rome," as it still fatuously calls itself in an age of which the proudest characteristic is that it is "rounding onward to the light," has passed through three phases in its general attitude to the race. Until the 16th century it posed as a Holy Mother who boiled in oil or roasted in the market-place any of her children who were refractory to her authority. In the 16th and 17th centuries half of Europe resented this maternal treatment and, by a series of wars in which more folk were killed than in one of our modern world-wars, compelled her to confine her holy oils and fires to the more ignorant and helpless section of the family in Europe and America.

In the 19th century even these favored children began to grow up, and the poor Church had to rely upon apologetic appeals to reason and, where it could, threats of boiling oil in the next world if you listened to the appeals to reason of the other side. But the world at large smiled at its arguments and, until recent years, denounced its falsifications of history, and it invented a new technique; especially where, as in America, Britain, and Germany, the new democracy, which it had fought truculently for ages, gave it sufficient strength to make politicians listen respectfully to it,

whatever lies it told, and professors, writers, and editors hold their tongues.

It was now, whatever you thought about a next world, the savior of society, the one educative force that could preserve the fabric of civilization from the dry rot of Materialism. And the most precious and most fortifying of its spiritual vitamins is, it says, its teaching in regard to sexual behavior.

Fifty years hence, when the historian or the sociologist looks back upon this amazing quarter-century (1925-1950) in which we live, he will count this one of the most belly-tickling of its many paradoxes. Freedom is the slogan we have written largest on our skies, yet we profess a profound respect for an oracle that bids us retain one of the oldest, the most feebly-based, the most pervasive of tyrannies.

Realism is the most resolute condition of our thinking, yet here, in both public and private life, we tolerate the most unreal and hypocritical of pretensions. Truth, we say, is the most luminous of our ideals, yet we listen gravely to a Church rebuking us in the name of an archaic superstition, drawn out by its medieval theologians into rules of behavior that are flagrantly defiant of our modern life and thought. Let's look into this matter.

1. WHAT THE CHURCH TEACHES AND WHY

In the course of the evolution of life the animal has come to be endowed with an apparatus of nerves in connection with its sex-organs which periodically urges it to seek a mate and rewards it with an intense thrill on copulation. We no longer say, as our fathers did, that nature has provided this incentive to secure the continuance of the species. In any brood or litter of young those which have this apparatus of gland and nerve a little more developed than the others will obviously have the larger share in forming the next generation; and, on the whole, like breeds like. That factor has been operative in the animal world for a billion years and we are not surprised that its operation has culminated in the sexual sensations of apes and men.

The Catholic Church, it is true, regards with disdain this doctrine of evolution, which is as normal a part of our modern culture as the rotundity of the earth is. It prefers the opinion of Moses or some even more ancient village-oracle who told the world five or six thousand years ago how things came to be. It says that God inserted this pleasure-apparatus in the animal organism to impel or induce it to play its part of increasing and multiplying. We might ask why it was so important that the tiger, the shark or the centipede, even the louse and the flea—in fact, half the animals in nature—should be induced to increase and multiply. But that is one of the beautiful mysteries of creation, and we will confine ourselves to the human animal.

It is the first foundation of the Church's sex-ethic that, since this pleasure was provided only for the sake of the procreation of children, it is rigorously forbidden to seek or procure it in any other way or for any other purpose. Again we feel, in spite of the high reputation for logic that Catholic theologians give themselves, that there are little

weaknesses in this reasoning. We might point out that our eyes were developed for the purpose of finding food and avoiding enemies but (in art, entertainment, etc.) we have found a hundred other pleasant uses of them. But, as the Catholic despises these evolutionary ideas, let us say that our palates were clearly provided to guide us in the selection of food, and even the Catholic most shockingly abuses the pleasure attached to them when he calls for a shot of bourbon, attends a cocktail party, or indulges in tea, coffee, spices, coca-cola, and so on. We might, in fact, point out that we never heard of a priest refusing to marry a widow of 50 or more whose child-bearing days are over, or making indelicate inquiries of the lady as to what she proposes to do. The Church does not tell him to do this; nor does it direct him to step in and order separate bedrooms when a married couple are clearly sterile, or forbid a husband to continue to sleep with his wife, as nine and a fraction out of every 10 Catholic husbands do, when a child is already on the way.

However, we shall see a good many of these oddities in a later chapter. The principle is inexorable; it is an offense both against God and nature—nowadays the theologian takes great pride in proving that his ethic is natural as well as scriptural—to seek or enjoy any shade of sexual pleasure apart from this grim purpose of adding to the population. Here again we should like to ask questions—with all respect. Country after country is now overpopulated or looks with deep concern at the growth of its population. Experts of the highest authority assure us that unless we check this modern growth of population the earth will, even 20 years from now, not to speak of 20,000,000 years, be unable to supply enough food. That situation would already have arrived if the majority of civil-

lized non-Catholic countries had not practiced birth-control (but certainly not sex-control) for decades. Anyhow, even a high-school child can calculate that it will arise before the end of this century unless there is a general check on the growth of population, whatever progress agricultural science may make. Will our grandchildren then see the Pope—if there still are any of these profound oracles—ordering that, since only a restricted number of births can be permitted each year, a comparatively few couples shall be licensed—all good Catholics, of course, and perhaps after winning tickets in papal lotteries—to carry on, and the remaining two-thirds of the race, from the age of 13 upwards, shall be compelled to wear something like the chastity-girdles that were occasionally used in the Ages of Faith? Will they be forbidden to have any fun and games or forms of art that might lead to a little “commotion”? Is all this sort of thing involved in the promise that the world will have a beautiful time when it returns to the allegiance of the Papacy?

However, let us get on with the argument of the papal moralist. I have before me the large Latin manual of moral theology from which I learned that dismal science more than 60 years ago, and I have looked over more recent manuals to make sure that there has been no change. So I am not likely to misrepresent it. The next step in the argument is that, in order to ensure that sex pleasure shall be used only for its appointed purpose, the multiplication of the population, the Church instituted indissoluble monogamous marriage and fixed a canon of eternal damnation against any and every form of sexual indulgence outside matrimony. This, it assures us, is its greatest contribution to the happiness of the race and the stability of civilization.

I confess that here again I see difficulties. “Nature itself,” says my theological manual, “confirms this, for otherwise, to the ruin of the race, the reins of lust would be relaxed and men would take no care to provide for its maintenance.” Remember that, as the Catholic apolo-

gist continually reminds us, his Church speaks with “a most profound knowledge of human nature,” based on 19 centuries of devoted care for our moral interests. But there is surely something wrong here. This indissoluble monogamous marriage is supposed to be the grandest of institutions, radiating sunshine from happy homes. Yet the same apologist who assures us of this now offers us a picture of the race boiling with rebellious lust, so eager to throw off all restraint that it is ready to bring about its own destruction, held within the bonds of marriage only by the sure and certain knowledge that if a man does not submit to them he will spend all eternity in an underground tank of burning sulphur.

The moralist is, properly, a privileged person, but in logic he cannot have it both ways. And it is quite useless to attempt to reconcile the contradiction by a sort of ethical totalitarianism; to say that the interests of the state demand that we shall pay this price for our license to propagate the race. For the modern state emphatically does not want every pair of mortals to do their best at procreation but would be distinctly embarrassed and alarmed if they did; as statistics show that in every enlightened community the majority do not. I venture to doubt if even Catholic couples are strictly chaste during all their days and nights except the two or three years (or two or three weeks) in which they create their two or three children.

But let us proceed. The moral theologian calls sexual pleasure not covered by the sanctifying license the vice of “luxury.” Wealthy folk may not like that use of the word but Augustine and Aquinas so used it, and, as Aquinas points out, there is no other general term. Modesty forbids me to follow the theologian in his physiological analysis of the various shades and degrees of luxury and his fine distinction between “distillation,” “emission,” “commotion,” and so on. In any case I prefer the analysis and classification of the modern sexologist, of whom the Catholic theologian does not seem to have heard. He talks about these

things much as Aristotle did 2,300 years ago; except that Aristotle liked a good dinner, a bottle of good wine, and a pretty companion as healthily as any other Greek did. However Aristotle did make one blunder upon which the Catholic philosopher improves. He emphatically rejected Plato's idea of a spiritual soul, but he also rejected the Materialism of practically all the other Greek thinkers. The brain, he said, is only a cooling chamber for the blood. It is not the body that thinks but an immaterial, though not spiritual, energy. Aristotle had little influence on his Greek contemporaries, though he was intellectually the greatest of his race. But this blunder of his had a deep and most pernicious influence on thought until the present century, and it is part of the basis of the crooked Catholic ethic.

The theologian distinguishes between "merely sensitive pleasure"—that derived from the sight or scent of flowers, music, and so on—and "venereal pleasure." So do we all, just as we distinguish between one organ and another. But the theologian, who is not much more subtle in analyzing human conduct than a Tibetan monk would be, draws a profound ethical as well as a psychological distinction because of his absurd idea that, while sensory pleasure as such is free to all, venereal pleasure is to be enjoyed only as a reward of procreation. He has, of course, as we shall see, a certain superstition at the back of his mind that makes his crude psychology cruder than ever. And this at once brings him into conflict with common sense as well as ethical science. This "carnal pleasure" outside matrimony is so horrid that not only is "the complete act," as he calls it, a mortal (or hell-fire) sin but every other pleasure that contains even a tinge of it or may lead to it is a mortal sin. He deals at length, for instance, with the question whether a kiss is a sin.

Having the advantage of being guided by the genius of Thomas Aquinas, who knew as much about human nature as an Indian Fakir does, he allows that just a brush of the lips (which hasn't time to start

a "commotion") is allowable but a prolonged or lingering kiss (number of seconds not specified) is a mortal sin. A French kiss is decidedly in the hell-fire category; so is the admiration and envy of it of the little stenographer (Catholic or not) in the cinema, while the kisses of the young folk who have necking or petting parties—I believe they are quite numerous in America—are sure tickets to Hades.

He allows that a nurse bathing a male infant does not incur eternal damnation for washing its little sex appendage, but if she lingers over the job or gets any particular kick out of it she is doomed. The children of 10 to 13 playing in the school-ground who, as they often do, touch each other immodestly (even over the dress) or exhibit their immature organs will burn forever, in the company of murderers, rapers, torturers, Catholics who did not go to church on Sunday morning, and the courting couples who took more than five seconds over the parting kiss at night.

But we shall see plenty of this incredible stuff in the next chapter. Here I want to explore the roots or principles of it. Those profound Schoolmen of the Middle Ages, building on the absurd psychology of Aristotle, at once saw the norm of conduct in these things. Sensitive pleasure is quite innocent, short of drunkenness or gluttony—which are not seriously condemned—provided there is no shade whatever of "venereal pleasure" mixed in it. Dismissing all our modern experts on sex as emissaries of Satan, he knows nothing whatever about diffused sexual feeling, erotic zones, glandular differences, vitamin E, and so on. It is all very simple. The girl who feels heavenly when she is out with her lover, the young man watching the charming costumes of Betty Grable in the cinema, has only to reflect whether her pleasant feeling has any element of sexual emotion in it, and, if so, she must at once quit the young man or the cinema. You do not often see them do it, and you do not blame them. I happen myself to be fond of little girls of 5 or 6. Whether my pleasure has any "taint" of sex in it I do not

know; and I could not care less. Even if the analysis were easy, we should hardly expect it in a cinema, during a moonlight walk on a summer night, on the bathing beach, and so on.

The theologian says that it is imperative to reflect in this way on your warmer sentiments, even if they are due to the smell of roses or the feel of silk undies, because sex is the slipperiest snake in the whole of creation. One step on it, and you are likely to be in the pit before you know where you are. To talk of this as a profound knowledge of human nature is ludicrous. Every adolescent knows what amount of truth there is in it, and there are circumstances in which he ought to take it into account. But we can sit through a fairly advanced show in the cinema, spend four hours over a novel that goes as far as the censor permits, or enjoy the nudities or semi-nudities in the illustrated weekly without feeling an urge to go out and rape somebody. It is much the same as in drinking alcohol. We know that it is the last glass that pulls most but as a rule we just please ourselves how far we go. It is one of the most barbaric religious doctrines ever invented that the man or woman who deliberately entertains a pleasure or emotion which is flavored with a little diffused sexual feeling is on the level of a raper or a murderer. In fact the majority of folk, whether they be Catholic or Protestant or Neo-pagan, go far beyond this and enjoy sexual feeling as such whether or no it leads to action. But while the most of us laugh at these archaic moralists and are masters of our own lives, the Catholic professes to respect an ethical system which, in all its expert representatives, insists that if he feels any pleasure in a leg-show on the screen or in a theater or enjoys a sex-story he is doomed, unless he confesses and gets absolution for his "sin" in time, to burn for ever.

The truth is, of course, that there is something behind all this pretence of first principles and logic in regard to sexual behavior. No moral theologian I ever read gives more than a line or half a line to

the real reason why we are prepared to consider restrictions on sexual pleasure which do not apply to indulgence in pleasure of the palate, the eye, and the ear: the danger of a girl having an illegitimate child in a social order that punishes her cruelly for it. The fundamental difference between the sex-ethic that the majority of us respect and the Catholic ethic is that to us sex is in itself as normal a pleasure of life as wine or art but is subject to a restraining in certain conditions because of consequences, while to the Catholic moral theologian sex is in itself evil and repulsive and is allowed only in certain conditions on utilitarian grounds. He is tolerant of drunkenness, cruelty, sourness, hypocrisy, lying, exploitation, slander, arrogance, etc., but he pours the dregs of his theological dictionary on a witty sex-story or a pair of youngsters that he finds necking. We are asked to admire as a "sublime" or "lofty" code of morals a set of rules of behavior that are based on a superstition that belongs to the infancy of the race.

I have explained in earlier booklets (chiefly those on Satanism and on Chastity) what this superstition is and how it came to be vitally embodied in European, and later American, culture. Briefly, some four or five centuries before the Christian Era began a Persian sect, though it seems probable that they got the idea from Babylon, made a childlike attempt to reconcile the primitive idea that gods made the world with all the ugly features that are found in it. God, a supremely good principle, made a world that was all beautiful and pure and spiritual. Then a supremely evil spirit, with almost equal magical power, turned it into the material world which we know. This is supposed to be profound: the intuition of a seer. But the appearance of this absurd philosophy of life—that the body, like all matter, was created by the devil, and he uses its sex-life particularly to seduce the god-created spirit—coincided with Persia's rise to world-power and, while the great majority completely ignored or were completely ignorant of it, small groups in one or other part of the

vast Persian Empire, which covered almost the entire civilized world, adopted the ascetic life and the scorn of sex which it involved.

The Greeks in their prime had learned to think and were proof against this dreary superstition. What we call a philosopher today is a man who spins a fine web of abstract words in some cloistered library, like a spider in a dark corner. But to the Greeks, who invented the word, a philosopher meant a man who thinks about the reality of life independently of religious traditions and in many cities gave practical guidance to so large a proportion of the citizens that statues were raised in their honor in the agora (or market-place), where crowds gathered round them and discussed the questions they raised. A high proportion of them taught the people to laugh at what we call problems of philosophy and confine themselves to practical matters of the personal and civic life. Not only these but the overwhelming majority—one of our leading authorities on them, Zeller, says nine-tenths of them—were dogmatic Materialists and would have regarded this Persian nonsense much as we regard the story that God took a rib out of Adam and made it into a woman. Thus, apart from one or two "mystery" sects, which introduced a touch of asceticism at rare intervals, the Greeks had a sensibly-balanced view of human nature. Contrary to the statement of some of our modern philosophers even the Stoics did not in the least frown on "the flesh." The ancient Greek authorities tell us that Zeno, who seems to have been personally of the colder masculine type, went out of his way to prove to his fellows by personal action that his philosophy did not discourage the enjoyment of sex-pleasure, even with youths. Epicurus, who shared the intellectual allegiance of the Greek world with Zeno from about 300 B.S., onward, is absurdly represented by religious writers as making "pleasure" the supreme good. Nevertheless he had not the least shade of the Persian taint. He advised only against excess in any pleasure.

The Jews who, with the Greeks,

provided the foundations of the later European ethical philosophy, were just as far from this sour Zoroastrian view of the flesh. Until they came into contact with the Persians they did not believe that man had a spiritual soul, and centuries of the practice of phallic religion had taught them a high esteem of pleasures of the "flesh." But in the extraordinary ferment of ideas that spread from Egypt to China in the few centuries preceding the Christian Era some of them adopted the new idea and formed ascetic sects like the Essenes. Since the imposition of the monotheistic cult of Jahveh by the priests, however, the Jews had been reared in a fierce opposition to polytheism, adherences to which was made by the priests the first crime in the Decalogue. The Ahriman or supreme evil spirit of the Persians was too god-like in power to be admitted by any Jew. But in his own mythology he had a story, borrowed from Mesopotamia, that enabled him to modify the Persian version. God had made the world all fair and deathless, but the first mortals had disobeyed him, and so with a wave of the omnipotent wand he had transformed the earth—then, remember, considered to be a flat plain of limited dimensions—into a vale of tears. That got rid of the polytheistic element. But sex was still the work of the devil. By this time the serpent in the Hebrew story which tempts Eve to tempt Adam to steal a few apples from the reserved orchard was identified with Shaitan. It was his fault that human nature had been corrupted and cursed, and his purpose was clear.

Learned theologians brooding over that child's book of early fairy tales, *Genesis*, do not agree upon the meaning of the saying that Adam and Eve before that fatal robbing of the orchard were naked, but "not ashamed." Either there was no intercourse or it was conducted with a spiritual serenity, undisturbed by any of that "commotion" which the moral theologian so much dreads and deplores. In either case lust, concupiscence, animal passion, the morals of the farmyard, etc., only began after the fall, for which the

devil was responsible. The knave knew perfectly well that once this inflammable element was planted in human nature he would have a much finer prospect of success in his mysterious campaign to drag mortals down to the same level as himself and his fallen angels. Henceforth life was to be a titanic conflict of the spirit, from the age of 13 onward, against the world, the flesh, and the devil; and it might almost be summed up as a fight against sex.

This is the basis of the lofty ethic which even professors in American universities press on us moderns, and ladies with the highest American education that money can buy embrace as the choicest wisdom to be found in the 20th century. In

the Catholic version, which is the old story raised to the academic level by the "great" theologians of the Middle Ages, it is worse than ever. A personal devil and a personal (guardian) angel attend each one of us, the black fellow whispering evil thoughts in one ear, the good angel whispering in the other. Also "grace" is absolutely necessary to strengthen the will to resist. Between glands, vitamin E (which lurks particularly in salad), original sin, and her private devil companion the poor Catholic girl must have—I nearly said a devil of a time—to distinguish whether what she feels in the cinema is pure "sensitive pleasure" or is adulterated with "venereal pleasure."

2. THE GRIM CHURCH FATHERS AND THEIR GAY CHILDREN

In the beginning of my Free-thought career I adopted a theory of the rise of Christianity which divines, and some other scholars, regard as eccentric. It is the view that Christianity began as an offshoot of the Jewish sect of the Essenes. I hold this theory more strongly than ever. There is far too close a resemblance between the teaching put into the mouth of Jesus in the gospels and that of the contemporary Essenes of Palestine, as described by Josephus, the Jewish historian, to be coincidental. It is enough for my present purpose to point out that the Essenes strictly forbade their members to marry. They were recruited entirely by conversions. This was so violently un-Jewish an attitude that I conclude that it reached the Essenes, in the east of Judea, from one of the missionary religions from Persia, and from the Essenes it passed to the first "Christians." It is obviously based on the theory that sex is tainted.

The hundreds of writers who have given us so much fragrant prose on the sublimity and uniqueness of the Christian ethic have one common characteristic; they have obviously never read the ethical systems of contemporary religions and philosophers to which they declare the Christian ethic to be so superior. I believe that I am still the only writer who ever made an exact comparison. In my "Sources of the Morality of the Gospel" London, (1914) I have put in parallel columns a long series (80 pages) of moral sentiments from Jewish and pagan sources which give an equivalent to every sentiment ascribed to Jesus in the gospels. As far as most of these—justice, mercy, veracity, honesty, kindness, etc.—are concerned no properly-informed person would need the assurance. They were platitudes of teachers from end to end of the Greek-Roman

Empire. But in regard to the sex-clauses the Christian ethic is, not indeed unique, but different from most of the others. I have already described the general Greek attitude. Most of us would, in fact, be glad to find that the teaching of the gospels in regard to sex—not its condemnation of adultery, which was common in both Jewish and pagan moralists, but its saying (in one single passage) that to look with desire at a pretty woman is as bad as adultery—is unique. And it is a perverse, unnatural, superstition-infected ethic. But, as I said, this Persian asceticism had been brought to Europe by Mithraists and Manichaeans, and some of the small body of right-wing or religious Stoics accepted its influence. Epictetus, who ran into just the same excesses of virtue as Christ, said, "Our souls are intimately joined to God. Must he not be sensible of every movement of them?" (*Discourses*, I,14). Seneca said: "If a man be with his own wife, imagining her another, he is an adulterer" (*On Constancy*, VII,4). Plato, Plutarch, Apollonius of Tyana, Marcus Aurelius, and other pagan moralists go far in the same direction.

However, there is so little of this unnatural ethic in the gospels that, as I told in my booklet on chastity, a reputable New York divine claimed at a congress of his church that Jesus never insisted on sexual asceticism but, on the contrary, rebuked the Pharisees for teaching just what our moral theologians call the distinctively Christian ethic. That ethic is, it is true, rarely mentioned in the gospels, but it is thundered in every epistle of Paul, the real founder of the Christian religion. Those epistles are the first and the fundamental documents of the Catholic sex-ethic, and there is not the least ambiguity about them. Paul has admirable passages on charity (of which he seems to have

had little) and the social virtues but his eyes are bloodshot with visions of men and women corrupted by "Adam's fall" reeling to hell on account, chiefly, of their sins of the flesh. He sees something loathsome, diabolical in sex. If you plead that it is too imperious for you, he says grudgingly, almost pityingly, that you had better get married. "It is better to marry than to burn" . . . In those words he condemned marriage and woman to an inferior position, glorified virginity as a superior state, and started the tradition in the West that the sex-act or thought of it, or anything (work of art or book) that inspires a thought of it, is in itself dirty, tainted, of diabolical odor, something odious to good men and women.

And it was from Paul, not Jesus, that the more prominent bishops and writers of the early Church who are called the Fathers took their teaching in regard to sex. The supreme virtue is purity; the supreme vice is impurity. They lived in a world that exhibited on every side the great crime against man of slavery, and they never—not one of them from Jesus and Paul downward for more than 1,000 years—say one word against it, though some of the pagan moralists eloquently denounce it. They see tyranny, war, the exploitation of the weak, and cruelty in the administration of the law on every side, and the lofty new ethic does not fire them with indignation. They see the Roman Emperors make a spirited and largely successful effort at a social improvement of the world by punishing cruelty to slaves, granting justice to women, extending education to the mass of the people, and inspiring philanthropic enterprises all over the Greek-Roman world; and they never give a word of appreciation. It is the eternal things that matter, and chief of these is that men and women shall escape punishment in an eternal hell by fighting against sexual impulses. Naturally they are apostles of all the virtues (except toleration) but to the vast injustices of the social order about them and the noble pagan efforts to overcome them they are almost blind. They see the devil almost alone in the

sexual freedom of the community; though in all but a few short periods it was no greater than it is in our world and was never so great as in the Middle Ages.

That this is their main ethical preoccupation is seen not only in the loud praise of virginity as a physical condition which is found in all their works—a literature which led even in their own time to the vast hypocrisy of the sacred virgins, monks, and celibate priests—but to a positive depreciation of marriage and contempt of women as an inferior creature. The first step in the creation of the power of the clergy, which has been one of the worst evils the new religion brought upon the world, was to segregate them from the rest of mortals by special garments, sanctuary rails, and, especially, excluding women from their rank or their level. Human nature was still too strong to let the church pass and enforce a decree of universal clerical celibacy but all the Fathers violently opposed the marriage of the clergy. The priests of the cult which the Christian leaders most despised, that of Cybele and Attis, a phallic cult, were compelled to castrate themselves. The priests of the new religion were allowed to bind themselves by the silken thread of a vow or promise. But the principle was as bad as the hypocritical practice. The priest would be contaminated in some degree even if he indulged in normal human intercourse under the license of marriage.

Some of the Fathers gave full expression to their disdain of marriage in their works, and Jerome, the ferocious puritan who saw only about a score of good men and women in the whole Christian population of Rome, is quoted as saying "I praise nuptials, I praise marriage" but as Catholic writers know, that is only half his sentence. What he says is (Ep. XXII) "I praise marriage only because it gives me virgins." "It is time," he says in another letter (CXXIII), "to cut down the forest of marriage with the axe of virginity." In fact, the long letter in which Jerome seeks to poison the mind of the girl Eustochium, of one of the highest noble families in Rome, against marriage is so

crude and fanatical that the police would be interested if we published a full literal translation of it today. St. Gregory of Nyssa wrote a treatise on virginity in the same terms. Origen, admittedly the most learned of the Fathers, castrated himself. Clement of Alexandria, the second most learned, said disdainfully: "Fornication is just a lapse from one marriage into many." Athenagoras says that marriage is just "a decorous form of adultery." But as there is not one single Father who sees in marriage anything except a "refuge for weaklings" I need not quote further. As Professor Lecky says: "It was a favorite doctrine of the Christian Fathers that concupiscence, or the sensual passion, was the original sin of human nature." Lecky was himself a severe puritan. For "sensual passion" read the normal sex-impulse, and you get the true character of patristic literature.

And this contention that there is something unclean in sex even in marriage easily leads to a contempt of woman. In Greece and Rome woman had won justice, but the thick Hebrew strain in the new religion brought with it the Semitic contempt of woman. In one of the most liberal of the late Hebrew books, Ecclesiasticus (XLVII, 14) we read: "The badness of men is better than the goodness of women"; and even in the older and more official books a mother is condemned to do twice as long a penance for bearing a female as for a male child. This ancient tribal disdain of woman was strengthened by Paul's stress on Adam's sin—entirely because he was "tempted by the woman," of course—and its monstrous consequences for the race, and by the new horror of sex derived from the Persian devil-theory. All this sacred literature, in all ages, has been written by men, and it usually assumes that the male would be quite an inoffensive creature were it not for the diabolical seductiveness of women. So the Fathers pour scorn on her. In Jerome she is "the root of all evil," and even the more-sober and practical Ambrose reminds the women of his flock that "God took a rib out of Adam's body, not a part of his soul" to make woman; that "she

was not made in the image of God as man was." The learned and comparatively liberal Clement of Alexandria reminds her that Paul has ruled that the man, not the woman, is the head of the family. St. Gregory of Nazianzum, the poet of the patristic family, almost romantic at times, is the originator of the slogan that woman's place is the home (in his Poem to Olympias) and says: "Blessed is the one who leads a celibate life and soils not the divine image within him with the filth of concupiscence." His poem ends:

Fierce is the dragon, cunning
the asp;
But woman has the malice of
both.

Chrysostom, or "John of the Golden Tongue," whose sermons drew crowds of women, reminded them that "woman shall not demand equality, for she is under the head."

Of the Latin Fathers, who had more influence in Europe, the sardonic Tertullian says to women in his work "On the Adornment of Women":

"If your faith were as firm as its eternal reward, my beloved sisters, no one of you, after learning of the living God and her own condition as a woman, would dare to seek gay apparel but would dress in rags and remain dirty as a sorrowful and repentant Eve."

Warming to his subject he apostrophizes woman thus: "Thou art the devil's gate, the betrayer of the three, the first deserter of the divine law," and he declares that marriage "is not far away from fornication." Augustine who had more influence on later ethics than all the others put together (and a more intimate knowledge of woman from his pagan days) is in his mature and saintly years the most contemptuous of them all. "We must beware of Eve in every woman," he writes to a youth. In his treatise "On Conjugal Good" he allows that if a man finds his wife sterile he may have a second wife at the same time but woman must not think of claiming the same privilege because "by a secret law of nature, things that are higher must be unique while the things that are lower are

subordinated." In his final commentary on Genesis he wonders why on earth God created woman: It was certainly not to be a companion of man because "how much better two men can live and converse together than a man and a woman." He suggests that God had a little difficulty in regard to the tragedy of the Fall and Curse, which was part of the plan of creation. How could the devil seduce a noble being like Adam? Well, perhaps God had to create this inferior being, woman, to give the serpent a chance! Jerome I have already quoted and will add only this further pleasantry of his: "Marriage is all right for men who are afraid to sleep alone at night."

I translated these passages from the Greek and Latin text of the Fathers and first published them in my "Religion of Woman" in 1905. It is one of the many freaks of the religious world that in the fierce fight for the suffrage that was then beginning not only was that book widely used—Lady Snowden, who was religious, once told me that it was her bible—but several of the other feminist writers reproduced them, yet women on every side continued to listen complacently to the preachers who assured them that Christianity was "Woman's best friend." This struggle for the rights of women was itself a reminder that 17 centuries of Christian influence had left her in a position of grave injustice, for no one pretended that the cruel legal and social disabilities of which the pioneer women of the 19th century complained had been imposed in recent times or since the Reformation.

And while this pernicious teaching of the Christian leaders led to—if we count from the time when the bishops got social and political power—15 centuries of degradation and subjection for women, its influence on the ethical side was a complete failure. What ascetic ideas there had been in ancient Greece had had artistic or ceremonial aims. Christians are apt to forget that the noblest and most celebrated edifice of the ancient world was the Parthenon, a temple raised in honor of a virgin (parthene) goddess, and that another great goddess of the

Greeks, Artemis (Diana), was chiefly honored for her cold "chastity," and the priestesses of her chief temples were bound by a vow of chastity just as the Vestal Virgins were at Rome and the Priestesses of Isis in late Egypt. Aphrodite herself had two characters: one as patroness of love the other and less popular as patroness of virtue. Many stories were current attributing a sort of magical influence to chaste women. But all this had no practical influence on general ideas of morals. The philosophers or moralists themselves, except the few religious Stoics I mentioned, merely demanded fidelity to a marriage contract. Unmarried men were free and no one cared in the least what ideas and feelings were engendered by the sight of the nude gymnasts or the nude statues that met the eye everywhere, and without fig-leaves.

The morbid state of the new world, after the establishment of Christianity, was to a large extent due to this malediction of sex by the Christian leaders. If the conventional idea of the change—that a world which had for centuries been slimy with "vice" now flowered with the white lilies of "virtue"—we might regret the tragedy, but that was not the nature of the change. I call it morbid because what happened was that the vast bulk of men and women lived in defiance of a code of life which they not only accepted but professed to regard as far more authoritative than the counsels of Plato and Aristotle and confirmed by appalling "sanctions"; so to bring some sort of logic into life they had to allow the clergy to increase their power enormously by professing that they, and they only, were able to "forgive sins" and cancel the legal penalties of them. There were other evil consequences—it was felt, for instance, that if the ruler of the universe thought fit to torture for all eternity a child of 13 for not distinguishing properly between the sensual and sexual elements in its sensations, men were justified in inflicting the rack or boiling oil on civic offenders—but it is enough here to note how the world drifted into a long period of morbid divorce between code of life and natural behavior, which check-

ed really moral or social progress for more than 1,000 years.

It may be thought that as long as Christians were a small minority in the cities, meeting in secret and, as they walked the streets, averting their eyes from the pagan-symbols and signs of gaiety of life that were found on every side, they may have acted in accordance with the teaching of the Fathers. To confirm them in the narrow path the Church told them, for 100 years after the death of Christ, that the world was due to come to an end at any time. In these circumstances was established the harsh discipline of the primitive church. You did not become a member of it until you were baptized, or, if you committed a sin of the flesh after that, you were expelled and damned without remedy. Paul himself informs us in his letters that this discipline was not always enforced and that even converts were admitted in the churches. But we may assume a general condition of virtue and pious discomfort until the second part of the 2nd century. Then Pope Callistus, to the great anger of such Fathers as Tertullian, found and announced that he could forgive any sins in the name of the Lord, and his little community in the poor quarters beyond the river was transformed. His contemporary and rival, Bishop Hippolytus, a much superior man in every way, describes how corrupt the Roman community then became, especially in regard to sex.

But there are indications that it was already lax. Thirty years earlier the most licentious concubine

in the large harem of the orgiastic emperor Commodus, Marcia, was a member of the Christian community and on good terms with the Pope; as was also the man who appears to have been the head of the harem (possibly a eunuch). By the middle of the 3rd century most of the communities were corrupted, and in the 4th century there was, apart from small groups of zealots, no difference between the sexual conduct of the Christians, lay or clerical, and that of the pagans. A strict Gallic priest, Salvianus, writing in the 5th century on this subject of morals, tells us that the morals of the Christians from end to end of the Roman world are worse than those of the pagans had been. I have at all events shown fully and repeatedly from the works of the Fathers themselves that they were at least no better. Not only the savagely ascetic Jerome but all the other leading Fathers of the end of the 4th century emphatically assure us that the state of sexual morals in the Christian world was, from the angle of its own teaching, abominable. Men and women did claim and exercise their human rights but only by making a solemn profession of a creed which sternly denied them. It was not a healthy foundation on which to build a new civilization. The Empire passed away, and in the long Dark Age that followed chastity came to be called "the angelic virtue" because, says Dean Milman in his great history of the period, men concluded that it was suitable and possible only for angels.

3. HOW THE THEOLOGIANS DEVELOPED THE SEX ETHIC

My readers will know that if at this stage I make sweeping historical statements that are different from those one usually reads, it is because I have in earlier or larger works—chiefly the "True History of the Roman Church" and "The History of Morals"—proved them in detail and given abundant references to the contemporary authorities. Some day a psychologist will be bold enough to analyze for us the state of mind of men and women who sin lightheartedly as long as they retain the power to do so, and continue to sin by warming their ageing frames with memories, yet say that they are loyal members of a church which insists that they incur eternal damnation for every peccadillo (on the sexual plane). I do not remember that I ever committed one of these "mortal" sins as long as I was a Catholic, so regret that I cannot help the reader. But that has been the mode of life, not of an individual here and there, but of millions in each generation—judged by the defined code of the church's sex-ethic—for the last 16 centuries. It is another of the freakish situations that will intrigue and amuse the historian of the next century.

Those who have not my larger books will find a summary of the facts in my recent booklet "The Evolution of the Idea of Chastity," and I will here assume that knowledge. But some may wonder whether this remarkable divorce of code and conduct may not have been due to the vagueness of the Fathers when they talked about "soiling the divine image with the filth of concupiscence," as we said. Possibly, you may say, the great theologians of the later Middle Ages, who gave a "scientific form" to moral as well as dogmatic theology, explained more patiently why all sexual pleasure is "filth," how filth becomes clean and pleasant human emotion after mar-

riage, and why every little flutter of sexual feeling incurs condemnation to the undying sulphur-pits as surely as adultery, rape, or sodomy does.

It was during the Dark Age that the classification of sins began. Bishops were ordered by councils to visit the parishes in their dioceses, call the folk together, and invite them to confess their sins and receive absolution; just as folk had done in Babylon 3,000 years earlier and were then doing in pagan Mexico. But the average bishop was quite incompetent, or was unfitted by his potations, to work out the refinements of carnal sin, and a few prelates and abbots of sober life wrote lists of sin for them to use. We have several of these. Naturally we do not find in these any questions as to whether you had mere thoughts of wicked things or whether you spent more than five seconds kissing a maid and so let a sexual tinge creep into your pleasant sensation. There were too many big sins to bother about these small matters. We have a Roman document giving the questions which a candidate for an Italian bishopric had to answer when he came to Rome to be examined as to his moral fitness. He was just asked whether (a) he was an invert, (b) intimate with a nun, (c) addicted to bestiality, or (d) an adulterer or raper; and his word was taken as a sufficient guarantee.

One of the longest lists of sins is that compiled by the strict abbot Regino, of Prüm, in the 10th century (in the Migne collection of the Fathers, vol. 132). A priest is to be asked by the bishop if he has any woman in his house, if he has some little house far away from his church, if he drinks in the local pubs or gets drunk, if he has handed over the sacred vessels of the altar to the tavernkeeper as security of his drink-bill, if he has vomited as a result of drinking after

taking the sacrament in mass, and so on. The layman is asked if he has committed murder or cut off a man's hands, feet, ears, eyes, etc.; if he has been guilty of adultery, particularly with a nun; if he has had unnatural intercourse with his wife or her maid; if he has raped a virgin or a widow. And to show the complete perversity of the code, he is asked just as solemnly, if he has had normal relations with his wife on a Sunday or during Lent (which the clergy then forbade). The code, a century after Charlemagne had "restored civilization" in Europe (according to some of our historians), was just as crude as the life it reflected. The bishop did not ask a man whether he had had amorous relations with his servant-girl but only if they had been unnatural; and he asked just as severely whether a man had "drunk beer with a dead mouse in it" as he asked if he had cut off a neighbor's hands, or asked his wife if she had chopped up the sex-parts of a bitch and put the mince in her husband's beer as an aphrodisiac.

But the great Schoolmen had not yet come along so we will skip over several dark centuries, including the monstrous catalogue of clerical and monastic vices contained in "St." Peter Damian's "Book of Gomorrhah." We will go at once to the prince of the Schoolmen, Thomas Aquinas, whom Professor Maritain and Mrs. Clare Boothe Luce recommend as the finest guide and oracle that modern America could consult. Thomas was an Italian Dominican monk whose education began in South Italy, where the influence of the Arab civilizations and of Frederic II still lingered. He was well acquainted with the ideas of Aristotle, and he owes to the Greek whatever wisdom there is in his works on ethics or politics. But while Aristotle was sounder on these subjects than on philosophy, the monk approached them with the distorting prejudice of the Persian-Christian doctrine of the diabolic taint of sex. Aristotle had held what was later called the utilitarian view of moral law and had been in practice rather an epicure than an ascetic. Thomas had to prove that the Fathers or Paul were perfectly

correct. In his "Summa" (which does not mean "summary" but the whole of theology in many volumes, organically arranged, reasoned out) he has, in the second section of the second part a chapter on "The Vice of Luxury."

His first proposition—I am, of course, reading the Latin text not the ladylike English translation—is: "No venereal act can be free from sin" and the chief reason he quotes in support of this is that it is always "a superfluity of pleasure." I do not know whether this is one of the propositions that particularly fits Brother Thomas to be the guide of modern America but will certainly not waste my time arguing about it. This sexual impulse, he adds, is simply due to original sin. Man rebelled against God, so God made man's flesh rebellious against his spirit. Very neat: if you admit original sin or the prehistoric idea of the vindictiveness of the deity. He boldly confronts the claim of what we may call the moderates—there were plenty of skeptics in Paris and North Italy at the time—that, apart from adultery (which is a matter of justice) and rape, a man can do what he likes, and he replies that this is false because God is the overlord or "the principal lord" of the body and forbids us to do anything that tends to "corrupt it." This, I suppose, is one of the passages that our Catholics will call "profound." Sex corrupts the body because it is "unclean"—Paul and Augustine say so—and because it leads to so many other evils.

Here you have formulae which cover all those fantastic claims of the moral theologian which I summarized in the first chapter, and Aquinas endorses them in principle, though he does not dwell on them as picturesquely as he deals with sex in other books. In my recent "History of Satanism" I told with what tropical luxuriance this ascetic (and probably impotent) monk dilates (in several pages) on the physiology of intercourse with devils, incubi or succubi, and how children can result from it. Here he is content with abstract propositions. Kisses are lawful—the world will be glad to hear—if of short duration. (The five-second kiss I occa-

sionally postulate is a cold, scientific deduction of mine from the words of these great oracles.) If prolonged or if a faint tinge of sexual pleasure creeps in—as happens sometimes—it is a mortal sin. Same with all acts of touch, even handshaking. It is only on the subject of “nocturnal pollution” that the saint uses realistic language, but we shall see more of this in the next saint I take.

But I cannot quit Aquinas without reminding the reader, as I did in the case of the Fathers, of the general crookedness of the code of morals of which he is said to be the most masterly exponent. All round him in France and Italy were vast evils which he either ignores or justifies. Half the workers of Europe were still serfs (slaves) and foully treated. He repeats from Augustine that slavery is just in the sight of God. Jews were treated with the grossest injustice, and when he is expressly consulted on that point by the Duchess of Brabant, he replies that their sin in killing Christ has made them the slaves of Christians. The Inquisition had just been established and barbaric massacres of heretics perpetrated. He supplies a long and emphatic justification. He supports royal despotism, proves that receiving any interest on a loan is a mortal sin, vigorously supports all the current rubbish about devils, and has not a word to say about the injustice to women or the terrible cruelty that then particularly disgraced law and social life. . . . But see my “The Dumbness of the Great” for a summary of the blunders of the “greatest genius in Catholic history.”

There were scores of these “great theologians” in the 13th and 14th centuries, but, while really devout laymen like Dante refused to follow their estimate of sexual sin, all the theologians had to agree with Aquinas. So we skip a few centuries and turn to one, St. Dr. Alphonso Maria di Liguori, who is more famous even than Aquinas in this particular field. This stern puritan—he was probably as arid from the romantic point of view as a broomstick—had the singular fortune that his work on this subject, “The Apos-

tolie man Instructed how to Hear Confessions,” delighted the worst sinners of his day. It ran through 83 editions in six months. There was a story current in France that one reader of wicked books asked another: “Have you finished Boccaccio?” “Yes,” he said, “I shall soon begin Casanova.” “Well, I’ll tell you something better than both—Alphonso Liguori.” And, of course, you will gather from this that I cannot, in our pagan and materialistic age, translate for you the choicer gems of the saint’s language.

He starts from the same principle as Aquinas: “In the matter of luxury (whatever some say about the slight touch of a woman’s hand or playing with her fingers) there is no such thing as a small matter.” In other words, every act, thought, touch, look, etc., with the least element of sex-pleasure, is a mortal (or hell-fire) sin. He quotes Pope Alexander VII—a pope of the 17th century who was one of the most flagrant nepotists and loved to read the less delicate classics—severely condemning a lax theologian who has said that “it is not a mortal sin to kiss for the carnal and sensory pleasure which it gives.” You must not even touch a woman’s hand or stroke a piece of silk, says Liguoris, if it gives you the least “carnal delectation.” As to touching a less respectable part of a girl’s body—here I have to be careful—it is a mortal sin even if it gives you no sexual feeling at all. If you touch yourself in that indelicate way, the saint admits that if you do it “out of curiosity or thoughtlessness,” you may possibly escape eternal punishment. But may married folk do this? Yes, the saint says—though some theologians dispute this—if it is for the purpose of making each other more likely to carry out the divine purpose of procreation. Touching animals indelicately is, if it causes “delectation,” a mortal sin.

Passing to rape, he asks if the girl commits a mortal sin if she does not shout for help, and if she must choose death rather than dishonor. It is piquant to find that theologians are divided on these points, especially the first. You see, the man might add the sin of vio-

lent assault to the sin of rape if she called out! He then has an elaborate discussion of sins of vision. It seems at first sight extraordinary that he allows that to look at the indelicate part of "your sister or of a nun" may not be a mortal sin if it gives you no desire to touch or worse, but this only brings out again the perversity of the principle. Watching animals in their amorous practices may or may not doom you to hell, but to watch humans assuredly does. "To look at the less decent, though not indecent, parts of a woman, namely her arms, legs, or breast is not always a mortal sin if not deliberate or prolonged" and he says the same about looking at the face of a beautiful woman. It is the same as regards looking at nude statues or pictures. If you do so "merely out of curiosity" you escape the pit.

You may think that if Alphonso had lived in our age he might have modified this section on "sins of sight." The day before I wrote this I kept my eyes open—not that I usually keep them diverted but I may be busy thinking—on the boardings as I made my way to the British Museum. Of nine new films five were advertised, as were several cosmetics, by pictures (generally at least life-sized) of the actress with legs nude to within two inches of the trunk and often in a suggestive position. They were deliberate invitations to men to come and feel a mild but distinctly carnal "delectation." Such advertisements, often somewhat artistic, are found on tens of thousands of boardings and meet every eye. I look over a batch of illustrated weeklies, American and British, and find the pictorial advertisements and illustrations of stories straining after the same effect. And do not imagine that Catholics hurry past with averted eyes, thinking tremulously of devils and hells. Yet the theology is just the same today. The difference in experience from the days of the virtuous Alphonso is that in our time it is the picture that meets the eye, whereas in 18th century Italy it was the reality.

"To use obscene words in a joke" and "without a lascivious intention" is not a mortal sin, nor is it one to

listen to obscene comedies "out of mere curiosity or for a vain gratification." Puzzle out the psychology of that for yourself. Ought we to permit prostitutes? If, he says, following Thomas Aquinas, we do so only to prevent greater sins of men (rape and inversion) it is not a sin. Perhaps, he sagely suggests, we might permit them in cities but not in towns. (After all, there are always cheap excursions to the city or buses from the country). Are married folk guilty of sacrilege if they "have intercourse in church"? Not if they have to live there for a time. This will puzzle the reader who does not know the old church-law of sanctuary, which was then still in force. A criminal could not be touched by the law if he beat the cops in a run for the nearest cathedral and as long as he remained in it. As a result, there were still in the days of Voltaire whole colonies of wanted men and women living in the Italian and Spanish cathedrals. Theologians disputed if they had to be there two, 10 or 30 days before they might indulge in copulation. The general opinion was that if a couple of crooks knew that they would be in the church for a month they might begin on the first night. Possibly folk of that type did not consult theologians anyway.

Of the two large pages on sodomy I must make short work. The saint excuses himself for his long and realistic discussion because the confessor must, before he can give absolution, know whether it took the form of "perfect" (homosexual), "imperfect" (heterosexual or conjugal) or "irrumation" (see a medieval Latin dictionary). The saint is not sure whether such action on a dead woman is or is not "bestiality," but he is sure that while lay sodomists must be burned alive it is enough to punish a sodomitic cleric by depriving him of office.

Intercourse with a devil, in male or female shape, is always bestiality, he says. I despair of giving the reader an adequate idea of the saint's long discussion of self-abuse and of what is allowed or not allowed to married folk at night and during pregnancy; and it is misleading to give inadequate ideas. Perhaps it will suffice if I

venture to say that if (as is common), a married woman, hoping to avoid conception, rises and goes to the toilet or if a raped girl makes any sort of effort to get rid of the seed, they are booked for the eternal fires.

Much of this is argued with a crude realism that I, not being a saintly man living in an age of virtue, dare not convey to the reader. But while moral theologians in our time are not so realistic, though they write their treatises in Latin—you may completely distrust the sex-chapter of such works in English—the principles and chief applications of them are just the same. In my own manual Liguori is quoted on nearly every page as the leading authority. The summary of the church's sex-ethic which I gave from my modern manual (the Jesuit Lehmkuhl) in the first chapter agrees on every principle and main application with the teaching of Liguori. You have just the same dreary rubbish about kisses, embraces, nude statues, legs, etc. There is physiological information, often inaccurate, which an Emerson or a Maeterlinck would think an in-

credible piece of vulgarity, if not pruriency, to mention even in less realistic language, but there is not the faintest trace of a knowledge of sex as we know it from the proper modern experts. They talk about distinguishing between sensory or artistic and "venereal" delectation as crudely as the Schoolmen of the 13th century did, and the modern Jesuit offers his readers an even cruder criterion than Aquinas did. And since all this is supposed to be for the practical purpose of instructing the confessor what questions he must ask the penitent when she comes for absolution you can guess the kind of conversation that goes on in the confessional. A Catholic girl must, according to these moral oracles, hesitate to use the word "pants" in conversation with her boy-friend, but in the confessional she, if she does not know them already, learns the facts of life. But let us first glance in a general way at the real consequences in Catholic countries of this unique method of making them chaster than non-Catholic countries.

4. SEXUAL BEHAVIOR IN CATHOLIC COUNTRIES

There are two main types of Catholic propaganda. One is used within the sacred circle and it annihilates all opponents with the greatest of ease. The faithful, being held in blinkers—under the usual pain of hell if they read guys like Halde-man-Julius or McCabe—can be told anything that suits the purpose of the religious writer. In our present connection they are told that the ancient Greeks and Romans wallowed in vice until the fabric of their civilization crumbled and was blown down by the first blast of barbarism, and that the church then built a new civilization which has lasted 15 centuries and is as vigorous as ever—or was until the 19th century—because it is based on the Catholic sex-ethic, which preserves the family. It does not seem to trouble the educated Catholic in the least to see the great mass of his co-religionists duped by this tissue of lies. One never hears of a movement among the more intellectual Catholics to impose a regard for truth on the church's apologists even when they are addressing the blindfolded body of the faithful.

The second type of propaganda is the appeal to outsiders. Even here the falsification of history is appalling, because in America the professors of history have been tamed and dare not expose the lies of the propagandist. If you wanted today to refer a genuine inquirer to some neutral historical writer of weight who will tell him the facts about pagan, medieval, and modern sexual behavior, whom would you name? None! You would have to fall back on older authorities like the Cambridge History, and even these did not venture to tell the full truth. There is, however, a type of apologist who says let bygones be bygones; let's deal with society as we find it today. He appeals to reason. Leaving aside (as he never does) the question whether the church

saved civilization 1,500 years ago by its stringent code of morals—leaving out (as he never does) questions of cleanness and uncleanness, of the dictates of conscience, etc.—the Catholic sex-ethic is, he says, the only one that effectually controls the impulses of human nature by canalizing them in indissoluble marriage, and this protects marriage itself, which the state recognizes as its indispensable foundation, since it assures a full supply of new citizens.

I have already pointed out that the last part of this argument is already outdated. States are not so keen on large populations in a world that sees 20,000,000 new births a year, and, whatever skepticism you have about warnings, the fact is that even now half the population of the world (chiefly in Asia) has far from a full human diet and will claim it certainly within the next quarter of a century. A man must be wilfully blind not to see that the present high rate of increase of global population must cease and before the end of this century. Unless you want to see the advanced stocks sterile and the backward stocks gaining rapidly, birth-control will be a law of civilization. But let us confine ourselves to the question whether in point of fact the Catholic ethic is or ever was effective in its pretensions even though it is backed by a dogma of eternal punishment, particularly for sex-offenses against it.

It is absurd to propose to ignore history. Skepticism fills the atmosphere of every country in the world today, as no one laments more than the Catholic writer, and its influence is felt even where it is not candidly accepted. The Catholic claim is best tested when there was no skepticism at all (in the Dark Age) or when it had no influence on the faith of the overwhelming majority of Catholics (to the end of the 18th

century generally and in solidly Catholic countries to the end of the 19th). I happen to read the languages of the chroniclers in all these periods—Greek and Latin to about the 13th century, German, French, Italian and Spanish as well as English from that time to our own—and in my larger works have extensively described the sexual behavior in each age. And having examined also the morals of the more ancient peoples, according to the best authorities in each, in my "History of Morals" (Haldeman-Julius, 12 vols., 1930) I say that sexual behavior was never worse, from the angle of the church's code, than it was from the 2nd century to some time in the 19th; and the change in the 19th century, such as it was, came later in Catholic than in Protestant countries.

For proof of this, of course, I have to refer to my larger books, but I do not know one single historian or recognized specialist authority who ever said or implied that behavior was better in what the Catholic calls the period of greatest power of his church (1200-1550) than in our own time. As the papal court itself was corrupt during the far greater part of this time (or 1300 to 1650) apart from a few short intervals under puritan popes we know what to expect. I have not the least idea of claiming that sex morals then improved, apart from short puritan periods, in Germany, Holland, and Britain, but we are not here concerned with those. The relevant fact is that morals certainly did not improve in France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Latin America. In fact, Britain and German travelers to those countries wanted to find a sexual freedom which was unknown in their own lands. It was proverbial in the last century to talk of "the hot blood of the south," as if that explained the freer use of the knife and the open "immorality" everywhere.

Britons and Americans still—and much more strongly to the end of the last century—instinctively thought of sexual freedom if you mentioned Paris or Brussels. And if they did not generally attach the same idea to the name of Rome,

Madrid, or Lisbon, it was only because until the present century it was too expensive for large numbers to visit those cities or South America. The works of the literary travelers who did so generally agreed with Byron's frivolous expression in verse of his opinion when he visited a Portuguese city and saw it surmounted by a large statue of the Virgin: "Well do I wot the only virgin there."

In 1898 I found cabarets in the main streets of cities in the South of France announcing that they still offered the public—there was no reserve—the medieval show of "the young lady and the ass." In 1904 I stood, with an American, a consul of long experience in Italy and high connections in Rome, on the Capitol in the Holy City, while he pointed out the residence of the mistress and children of Cardinal Vannutelli, whom many expected to be the next Pope, and Roman boys pestered us, in broad daylight, while we talked, to employ their erotic services. In 1924 I saw in the Prater Strasse in Vienna many times more prostitutes, openly and smilingly soliciting, than I have ever seen in any other street in my life; the illuminated and artistic photographs of nude prostitutes in the vestibules of brothels in the main street of Budapest; and the little bunches of both male and female prostitutes, in evening dress, beckoning folk to come into the brothels of Athens. In 1925 I saw the night-life of Madrid and the obscene books mingling fraternally with the lives of the saints in the bookshops of the Sierpes in pious Seville. In 1927 I saw the neatly organized large system of prostitution in Mexico.

But let us, as far as possible, consult official statistics and for the latest period for which we can obtain them. The statistics published by the Latin countries are of no service in our present connection but we have official useful statistics published by the government of Eire which is more solidly Catholic than the Latin countries or Austria. Eire publishes in English an impressive looking Statistical Abstract, and it is doubtless reliable. But, in the judicial section we detect the

hand of the clerical dictator. During the entire reign of the pious de Valera crime in general, and sex-crime in particular, grew alarmingly, but alterations in classification prevent this fact from hurting the superficial eye. Taking the 11 years 1927 to 1937—years of placid development between the two world-wars and with a small growth of the population—we find that the average number of arrests for indecent assault (mainly rape) was 85, the number rising from 81 to 95 per year. But there is then a sudden and remarkable drop from 95 to 57 and for the next three years the average falls to 53. Now we might be benevolently disposed to think that the clergy, though not themselves very ascetic, had undertaken a spirited puritan campaign, and the full efficacy of the church's sex-ethic had miraculously brought about this remarkable reform. But the next item in the statistical table after "Indecent Assaults" is "Other Sexual Offences," an unusual heading in judicial statistics. And the number of these "other sexual offenses" makes just as remarkable a rise in 1935 as that of the heavier category shows a reduction. The figure rises in four years from 112 to 208; always remember, with an insignificant rise of the population. Thus while the average grave sexual offense drops from 95 to 57, the "other" category of sex-offense rises suddenly from 85 to 105.

A statistician would smile at the suggestion that this was not due to a deliberate transfer of offenses from the graver to the lighter category, and another change at the same date shows that this was the case. Juvenile delinquency as such does not concern us here, but, while Irish priests in England were moaning about the rise of it in that country, where it rose little in proportion to the increase of population, it was far worse in Ireland where there was little increase of population. In the eight years of which I have spoken it rose from 1,676 (in 1927) to 2,049 (in 1934). From that date onward no figure was given in statistics. Some sociologist might have noticed that while the Catholic

Church was so eloquent about the need for more religious instruction, of the Catholic variety, to check juvenile crime, it increased more rapidly in Eire and Poland, the two most Catholic countries, than in Britain and most other countries! If you cut out the British cities with the largest proportion of Irish—Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow, Bradford and Leeds—the British statistics are far more respectable than the Irish.

In the chief Irish daily, *The Irish Times* (June 12, 1937), there was a leading article, with the title "Saints and Sinners," on sex-morals in Ireland apropos of the opening of the Clare Circuit Court. There were 11 cases to be tried and of these "seven were cases of indecent assault on girls of less than 17 years of age" and another a case of concealment of birth. The Catholic judge, McElligott, roundly denounced the boast of writers of his Church that there is a great regard for chastity in Ireland and advised the clergy to send less missionaries abroad but keep them at home to "see what they could do to improve their own moral relations." The lie that Irish women are chaster than others has been exposed over and over again in the last 50 years, yet priests repeat it. One of the leading Catholic preachers in England, Father Nugent, a high authority on the life of the poor, repeatedly (July 16th, and 23rd, 1897, April 7th, 1898) proved in *The Catholic Times* that pregnant Irish girls were habitually sent to Liverpool and other British cities for delivery. In *The Scotsman*, the leading Scottish daily (March 28th, 1897), a civic official gave the same testimony for Glasgow; *The Tablet*, the leading British Catholic paper, gave the same evidence as regards Newcastle (September 30th, 1911); and English Catholic writers have shown it for London. Throughout the whole English-speaking world Irish girls swell the ranks of the prostitutes. Dr. Sanger says in his "History of Prostitution" that he found on personal inquiry that of 2,000 New York prostitutes 977 had been brought up as Catholics, 706 of them in Ireland. *The Catholic Times* quoted a leading

Catholic ecclesiastic of Liverpool saying that 60 percent of the numerous prostitutes of that city were Irish and only 30 percent English. So they kept down Ireland's rate of illegitimacy—while it was 9.30 in Catholic Belgium, 14.89 in Catholic Austria, 15.67 in Catholic Bavaria, and 50.00 in Catholic Guatemala. See the table of illegitimacy in a Dictionary of Statistics. Catholic countries show an extraordinary indifference to it.

Poland was, until the Second World War, the most Catholic country in Europe, the darling of the Vatican, as it donated more to Peter's Pence in proportion to its population, and in spite of the appalling poverty of most of them, than any other country. Unfortunately it does not keep sex-offenses apart in its statistics, but we may assume that in the strictly Catholic period 1919 to 1938 these varied with the other kinds of crime. And the total volume of crime rose appallingly. The prison-population in 1928 was 29,996; in 1936 it was 55,336. Came the war and tens of thousands of Polish soldiers were transferred to Britain. Their sex-morals were soon notorious from one end of Britain to the other. A friend of mine who lived near one large camp of them told me that they had not left a virgin in the district. Most of them were encamped in Scotland, and the Scottish local authorities repeatedly appealed to the government to remove them from the country on account of their morals. What morals are in Catholic Germany may be inferred from the extraordinary state of the monasteries which was exposed in the Catholic courts in 1936-8. In one Franciscan province, Rhineland and Westphalia, with less than 400 monks, 276 were arrested, and 61 escaped arrest only by flight (largely to Rome) on a charge of sodomy; and nearly every one was convicted in open court on the testimony of Catholic witnesses and the confessions of the friars themselves. The exposure spread to Bavaria and other parts. The neighboring Dutch monasteries were suspected but the Government took no action. How-

ever, we see in the criminal statistics of Holland in Bonger's "Criminality and Economic Conditions" that while the Protestants far outnumber the Catholics they have only 3.1 (per 100,000) of the sex-offenders while the Catholics have 4.4. In Holland more than 1,000,000 declare in the census that they have no religion. But sex-offenders with no religion were only 0.7 per 100,000 of their number. Catholics have the largest proportion of criminals and prostitutes in all countries.

I will not attempt to give figures for America. The jealousy of state and federal jurisdiction prevents the publication of statistics of crime for the whole of America, so that the country which leads the world in sociology is the poorest in judicial statistics. I am almost tempted to say that this is probably a relief to American sociologists. If there were accurate and full statistics of crime, clearly indicating the volume of sex-crime and juvenile delinquency, he would have no excuse for not studying the actual relation of crime and religion, especially in the cities, where there is the largest Catholic population. It is not the Atheist but the Catholic, and the sociologist intimidated by Catholics, who shrinks from such a study. Sociological literature is richer in America than in any other country in the world yet it disgracefully neglects the factual study of the relation of crime and religion. Even the fine Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences is lamentably poor in this subject; and, while it has two pages on Thomas Aquinas, whose "sociology" was prehistoric, the words "rape" and "indecent assault" are not even found in its index. It gives a few figures that have been published by some states but these do not give us the slightest assistance when we want to test the loud boasts about the Catholic sex-ethic. If any sociologist were to give us a scientific statistical study of sex-crime in, respectively, America and Russia, he would blow the Catholic bluff to shreds; and he would at once be dragged by the collar before the Committee of un-American Activities.

5. THE DEFIANCE OF MODERN CIVILIZATION

Any reader who has the opportunity of close observation of the life of Catholics may wonder if the church has not in recent times modified its sex-ethic. All this talk about the whisperings of the devil, the sin of prolonged kisses and hand clasps, the need to distinguish feverishly between "sensory and venereal pleasure" the duty to avert one's eyes from naked limbs, etc., reminds us of New England in the days of the Scarlet Letter or of a small and peculiar sect trembling somewhere in the expectation of the end of the world. But I made it clear that from my manual of theology of 50 years ago I learned this eccentric stuff just, in principle, as it is found in the highly-colored pages of Alphonso Liguori, and that I have compared more recent manuals and found no change. In fact, if you can get to see a Catholic prayer book in modern use you will, in a section headed "Examination of Conscience" find that every Catholic knows this. It is a complete list of sins which the Catholic studies carefully in church before he presents himself to the priest in the confessional. It helps him to recall what sins he has committed since his last confession. And prominent amongst the "mortal sins" are "bad thoughts." That almost covers the whole ground of Liguori's catalogue. The sense of it is that a kiss, embrace, look, or touch that gives you a gratification in which there is the least tinge of sexual pleasure books you for tartarus. This is supposed to be a philosophy of life for, not merely grown-up, but superior people.

The modern situation is that the average Catholic takes no more notice of the refinements of his church's sex-ethic than he did in the Middle Ages of its grosser commands. The Catholic girl and youth kiss as ardently and lingeringly as any others do. The man is perfectly

aware that when he goes to the cinema he will probably see a "leg-show." He laughs at the sex-jokes which he hears in the saloon, the club, or the shop. In America, of course, large numbers of "Catholics" belong to the church only in name. They profess the creed for social, domestic, or economic reasons or from sheer inertia. And there is a healthy element of this skepticism in much larger sections of the body. There is no more a sharp line between belief and non-belief (in the creed as a whole) than there is between "sensory" and "venereal" pleasure in kissing, wearing silk undies, or seeing a liberal film or work of art. Broadly Catholics learn more from their non-Catholic neighbors as to the practical and sensible code of life than they do from theologians. There was a famous French bishop and writer of the 17th century who secretly married. He held that his conjugal relations were perfectly correct "in the sight of God," though certainly not in the opinion of the church, which did not discover the marriage until after his death. A number of priests do this in every age. In the 20th century this genial view of the church's eccentric teaching on what most folk regard as harmless details of life is much more widespread.

But the theology has not changed, and the ecclesiastical authorities dare not change it. Probably in the course of the present century the Vatican will begin to permit the priests to marry, as they have often demanded, but if the law for the laity were altered there would be nothing distinctive about the Catholic ethic. It would have no "superiority" to boast about; no ground for demanding, as it will in America before many years, that the state must protect it from criticism and even subsidize its teaching. The trend of American life in this direction is so marked that we should

expect this—unless the American people open their eyes to the stupidity of the situation and tell the theologians and preachers to drop their medieval or early-historical bunk. No other people in the world takes a healthier view of sex than the American does. American fiction, however much a few writers are checked in certain details, reflects the cheerful view that sex is one of the chief alleviations of life. Films, in spite of the ludicrous admission of a Catholic censor with the code of a dancing dervish, reflect the same freedom and commonsense. The law imposes such restrictions as are socially required or desirable. Some want it to go a little further, others not so far, but this sex-ethic of a sour elderly spinster or a strict medieval monk, a code of life based on archaic superstitions about devils and uncleanness instead of on the conditions of a healthy social life, is as much an anachronism as kings and queens and barber's poles.

Yet it amazingly challenges our modern civilization in many ways. One of the most flagrant, though the marriage clauses of the Canon Law defy civil law in various other ways, is indissoluble marriage. The Catholic Church shares this only with a dozen of the lowest savage peoples on earth (whose circumstances recommend it). It is a conclusion from the fundamental principle that sex is dirty and diabolical unless it is kept within the bounds of social requirements. The requirement here is children, and monogamy is enough to secure these. If the Catholic happens to be rich, of course, he or she can get a declaration—even after sleeping together for 10 years or so and having a number of children—that they never were really married, though their mutual pleasure was as clear as the amusements of nuns on a feast-day, or get an application of the Pauline Privilege. The line between clean and unclean shifts magically. But one thing is clear in theology. All the divorced folk in America; and they are nowhere more numerous, are living in sin, though excused from the penalties because of their belief. There is,

nevertheless, a violent clash of Catholic and civil law. Virtually all over the world today civil law, inspired by social considerations only, insists on freedom of divorce. In the name of its absurd view of sex the Catholic Church is bound to forbid it wherever our modern democratic form, which it fought for centuries, enables it to do so by returning a majority of Catholic deputies.

Worse is the clash over birth control; and nowhere else is the Catholic dogma more ridiculous or arbitrary. The dominant idea of its ethic is that "nature," having been tainted in the Garden of Eden 6,000 years ago, has to be rigorously controlled or it will ride us to hell. When we ask why in modern times the church has set up in opposition to birth control, we are told that it is against nature and therefore against the will of the author of nature. Yet some years ago the clerical authorities, knowing that immense numbers of Catholic parents refused to bow down to this "profound" argument, recommended a system of birth-control to their people and blandly explained that it was "natural"; that it was only the "unnatural" method that they prohibited. It was a fake, of course, and immensely profitable to the church, which got its births all the same and sold books how to avoid births to the tune of hundreds of thousands of dollars. The Postmaster General at the time was a Catholic and allowed the books to go through the mail, while penalizing sound literature, on the ground that they advocated a "natural" method. Catholics did not even notice the cynical audacity of the new departure. From the days of Aquinas, in fact of Paul and the Fathers, this diabolical business of sleeping together was permitted to the laity for a single reason—the procreation of children—while the heroic priests, monks, and nuns kept their "nature unsoiled by concupiscence." Perverse forms of intercourse were heavily penalized because there would be no children. And suddenly American Catholics—it was not done in Britain—were informed, semi-officially, how they might marry and enjoy themselves as

any pagan couple amongst their friends, provided they keep to the "safe" three-fourths of the month, and need not care the toss of a nickel about the encumbrance of children.

I have once or twice suggested in the course of this book that an audacious psychologist could give us an entertaining book if he pushed his intimate inquiries in the liberal fringe of the Catholic world and got an insight into their reaction to the church's teaching on the conduct of life. This would be a rich field to explore. What does the average Catholic really think about sex? Is it in itself something dark, dirty, semi-diabolical? What does he think about its rapid and remarkable transformations? To the wedding day a girl must regard it as a fate that is worse than death, and then in an hour it changes into the most harmless and beneficent theory on earth. If she is rich and wants a change she may, after 10 years of chaste married bliss, not feel sure that she really and internally consented at the time of the marriage, and for \$50,000 or \$100,000 the learned psychologists of the Vatican will find that she is right and she may marry the other fellow; about whom she dare not even think, of course, until the magic formula is pronounced. If she had bought a license to marry a Protestant she may, after years of bliss, get tired of him and remember that he is a heretic and, for a new payment—purely for office-expenses, of course—she is instructed that if he refuses to turn Catholic when she asks him she can leave him and begin a conjugal career with another man. The creation of children is so important that in marriage she may indulge in practices which would be revolting before marriage, and it makes no difference if after a few years she cannot have children; and now, she can buy a little book that instructs her how to enjoy herself and avoid having children. At all events she must not talk intimately—it would be "dirty" and a "mortal sin"—to any man except her husband, but the confessor can talk to her as he likes in "the box," and I have known priests who interpret this to mean

that they can be just as intimate when visiting ladies in their homes, and have known young ladies who did not wait for questions in the box but under the license poured out picturesque details in a flood.

And now this question of artificial insemination adds to the perspiring labors of the casuist. The spinster who has been so drenched with talk about the horridness of sex that she shrinks from this degrading copulation even in marriage yet would love to have a child asks whether she may submit to a lady-doctor inseminating her. "No," says her confessor, "it is unnatural;" while the intercourse in which she is forbidden, under dire penalties, to indulge is as natural as drinking a coca-cola on a summer's day. She may not have venereal delectation without a child. Now she may not have a child without the delectation. The theologians are puzzled. But what about the living infallible guide they have at Rome? Oh, he's too busy studying the Assumption of the Virgin Mary.

Another clash of the hour is over the question of giving sex-instruction in the schools. To this the Catholic Church is opposed on the fantastic principles I have given. The theologian could hardly plead that boys of 13 and 14 are in danger of being inflamed to such an extent that they will be stirred to assault. The plea is that the young minds of the boys and girls will receive pictures of sex-matters which it is a "mortal sin" for them to entertain. Naturally they receive them in the ordinary experience of life, but the theologian insists that they must expel the ideas from their minds at once. The teacher or the education-authority says the opposite. Within certain limits—the representations of the the external organs on the screen are, of course, diagrammatic—the children are to become quite familiar with the main process of sex-life. But is there no risk that it will give the children some measure of "venereal delectation?" Certainly. I saw a photograph of a mixed group of children eagerly following the sex-lesson in one of the states—Oregon, I think—which gives them. I have no doubt that if

the state of mind of most of them could be photographed for the casuist he would see hell yawning for their little souls.

The truth is that his psychology is as crude as his mythology. He knows nothing about modern work in the psychology of sex. Physiologists now admit that babies, both boys and girls, from the first year of life onward are capable of masturbating and quite commonly do so. It is not until puberty that the sexual feeling becomes gonadocentric. Good folk first deny the statement of Judge Ben B. Lindsey, in his time the best informed man in America on the subject, that the majority of high school children indulge in one degree or other, and they then decide that their minds can be kept free of sexual ideas and corresponding flutters of emotion until they are 16 or 17. Teachers propose that their thoughts and vague feelings shall be made definite and sensible, and Popes, in these words of Pius XI, in his Encyclical of the year 1929, says:

"Far too common is the stupidity [softened in the Catholic translation to "error"] of those who, with dangerous assurances and under an ugly name propagate a so-called sex-education, falsely imagining that they can forearm youths against the dangers of sensuality by purely natural means. . . . Such persons grievously err in refusing to recognize the inborn weakness of human nature."

These bad practices of the young are, he says, not due to ignorance but to "the weakness of all unsup-

ported by the means of grace." Obviously he thinks that in Catholic schools (Elre, etc.) the children are little angels. I learned all the facts of life from my fellow-pupils (often under the shadow of the sacred banners and statues) in a Catholic primary school before I was 12. Yet Rome has since re-affirmed the position of Pius XI, and in some countries the bishops and archbishops jointly (in Britain in 1942) published pastorals enjoining teachers to bow to the authorities whom "2,000 years of experience have given an unrivalled knowledge of human nature."

The press bows humbly to all these pompous and nauseous fulminations: even to the brazen reminder of the Church's experience in the last 2,000 years! The people make little fuss when censors with these ideas are set to control their films, dramas, novels, and sculpture, and refrain from irony when they hear or read claims that our churches, especially "the venerable church of Rome," must be engaged more effectively to save civilization. They might at least say that Catholics may entertain what eccentricities they like within their own fold but it is sheer impertinence to pretend that these are something superior to the common sensible code of life of the American people. Indeed if we were really alert and mindful of our interests during our few decades of sunshine we should recommend this Persian-medieval creed to the notice of the committee that is so zealously seeking, even in our pumpkins, for un-American ideas and activities.

\$2.50

As relevant today as when it was first published half a century ago, this extremely revealing pamphlet by ex-priest Joseph McCabe clearly explains the sickness and pervasive perversion of the Catholic Church's teachings, practices, and history regarding human sexuality.